

Creating a Strong Lab Team: How to build a culture of caring and excellence

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Introduction

- CLIA Specialist/DoctorsManagement, LLC
- Principal/Keeler Laboratory Consulting, LLC
- BS Medical Technology
- Certified Medical Laboratory Scientist (ASCP)
- Certified Clinical Laboratory Consultant (AMT)
- Over 28 years of lab experience in various disciples of lab testing across a wide range of healthcare settings (Hospital, POL, Reference Lab, Urgent Care, Pediatric & Food Service Microbiology)



Objectives

Describe

Describe the qualifications (education & training) required as well as attributes of high performing lab employees.

Learn

Learn how to conduct effective and meaningful training and competency assessments.

Identify

Identify ways to build a strong mentoring team to support lab staff.



Sense of Urgency

The "Great Resignation" & "Silver Tsunami" "Quiet Quitting", "Quiet Firing"

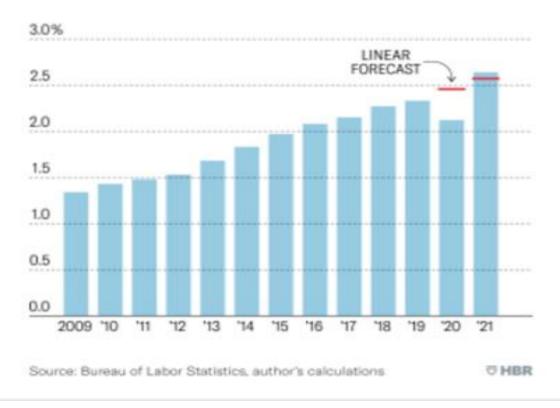
Harvard Business Review

- Retirement
- Relocation
- Reconsideration
- Reshuffling
- Reluctance

Average Monthly Quit Data

Data on total employment from 2009 through 2019 reveals that the Great Resignation is not a pandemic-driven anomaly.

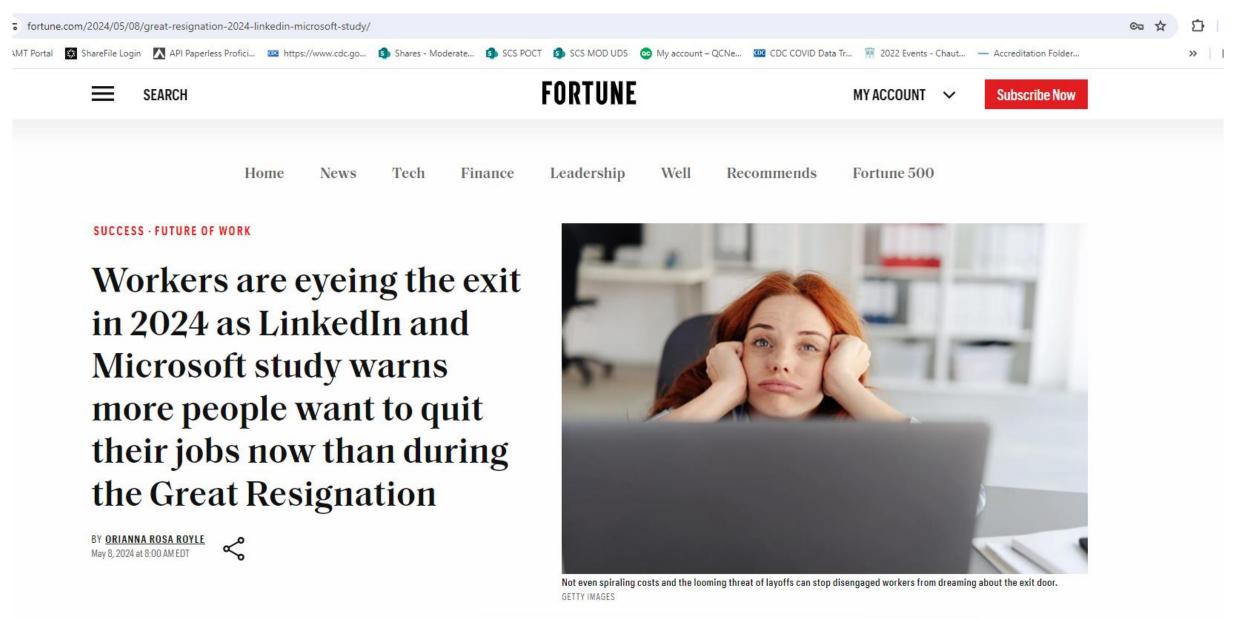
Share of workers voluntarily leaving jobs



https://hbr.org/2022/03/the-great-resignation-didnt-start-with-the-pandemic



Sense of Urgency



https://fortune.com/2024/05/08/great-resignation-2024-linkedin-microsoft-study/



Sense of Urgency

Increased workload for Supervisor/HR/Lab staff covering

Risk of potential candidates hired by another company

Staff burnout due to loss of employee(s)

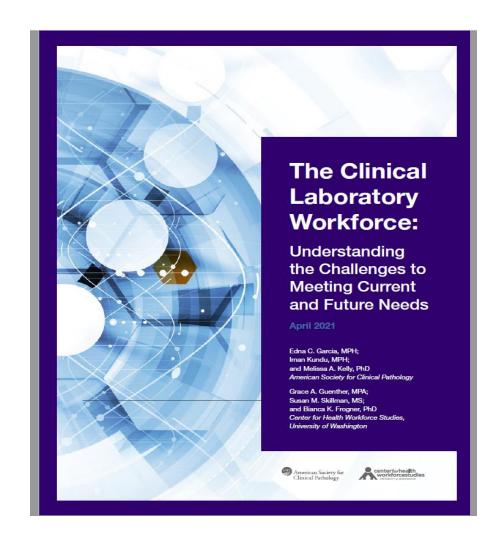
With increased work/stress, mistakes happen that could have been avoided

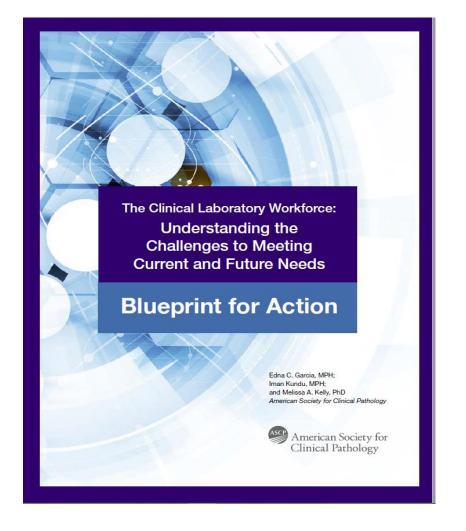
Work that should be done is put off because of priorities—and sometimes is never completed

Costly when delayed (OT, pay for temps, less testing/more send outs, shorter hours of lab coverage)



Resources







IMPORTANT!!

Personnel are your **MOST IMPORTANT** asset and determining factor in the success of your laboratory!

It doesn't matter how good your instruments are, if you don't have qualified, well-trained and competent lab personnel, the laboratory will not be successful.



Quote By John D. Rockefeller

"I have long been convinced that in the very nature of things, employers and employees are partners, not enemies; that their interests are common, not opposed; that in the long run the success of one depends on the success of the other."





Hiring Employees With The Right Values

- Integrity
- Loyalty
- Professionalism
- Assertiveness
- Detail-oriented
- Problem Solvers NOT problem Makers
- Prepared, Dependable, Intentional
- Want diversity People from different backgrounds/training





Hiring Employees With The Right Values



- Relational-Interpersonal skills: how well they speak/relate to others (team player?)
- Ability to embrace change and adapt to changing environments (key to survival)
- Want to learn and have a desire for continuous improvement
- Disciplined



Cast a WIDE NET when posting a job opening



- Job Fairs (Local, CAP)
- Local, National, and International Recruiting Firms
- Colleges-MLS/MLT, BS-biology, chemistry majors
- POST at location-cafeteria, in the lab, or on a sign outside the building
 - ***STAFF REFERRALS*** (give bonuses!)
- Online Postings
 - Company website
 - Indeed.com/Glassdoor
 - CAP/ASCP/ASCLS/AMT/ADLM/NAACLS
 - LinkedIn



Resume Screening





Gaps in employment (why?)



Appropriate education and/or certifications?



Accomplishments that validate potential candidate's abilities?



Do they "jump" from job to job frequently?



Does their resume show progress of growth in education and responsibilities over time?



Phone Interview



- Narrow down group of applicants to identify individuals that you want to pursue further.
- Prepare before you make the call.
- NO interruptions!
- Document each person's response on a standardized prepared form so you can easily compare and contrast the applicant's responses when done.
- Don't review the job prior to asking the questions wait until the end.
- Can usually get a feel right away if is a potential good candidate.



Phone Interview



- How would your last two supervisors rate your performance on a scale of 1-10?
- What are you looking for?
- What are you really good at?
- What are you not so good at/not interested in doing?



Personnel As Required by CLIA

Moderate Complexity	High Complexity		
Lab Director	Lab Director		
Clinical Consultant	Clinical Consultant		
Technical Consultant	Technical Supervisor		
Testing Personnel	General Supervisor		
	Testing Personnel		



Personnel Qualifications

- Varies based on Test Complexity:
 - Waived/Moderate/High
- Some states have additional more strict requirements
 - Higher LD requirements than Federal (i.e., PA)
 - Licensure required (California, Hawaii, Florida, New York, North Dakota, Tennessee, Georgia, Louisiana, Nevada, West Virginia, Montana, Georgia, Puerto Rico)
- Individuals may fulfill more than one role if qualified



Photo by christina-wocintechchat on unsplash



Personnel Responsibilities

- 42 Subpart M-Personnel for Non-Waived Testing
 - https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CFR-2021-title42-vol5/xml/CFR-2021-title42-vol5-part493-subpartM.xml

AND New Regulations that go into effect December 28, 2024

- https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2023/12/28/2023-28170/clinicallaboratory-improvement-amendments-of-1988-clia-fees-histocompatibilitypersonnel-and
- https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2024/02/01/2024-01942/clinicallaboratory-improvement-amendments-of-1988-clia-fees-histocompatibilitypersonnel-and
 - second link is to CFR correction regarding technical and typographical errors in original final rule.
- Some responsibilities the lab director can delegate (TS/TC and/or GS)
- Must be in writing





Lab Director Responsibilities

- Operation and administration of the laboratory, including the employment of competent qualified personnel
- CLIA Brochure Laboratory Director Responsibilities
- Now on site at least 1/6 months with at least 4 months between the two minimum on site visits (and documented §493.1407)





Clinical Laboratory Improvement Amendments (CLIA)

Laboratory Director Responsibilities

What Are My Responsibilities As A Laboratory Director

NOTE: Congress passed the Clinical Laboratory Improvement Amendments (CLIA) in 1988 establishing quality standards for all laboratory testing to ensure the accuracy, reliability and timeliness of patient test results regardless of where the test was performed. The final CLIA regulations were published in the Federal Register on February 28, 1992. The requirements are based on the complexity of the test and not the type of laboratory where the testing is performed. On January 24, 2003, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) published final CLIA Quality Systems laboratory regulations that became effective April, 24, 2003.





- Communicate expectations
- Clearly define responsibilities
- Shows what "success" looks like & how it will be measured





- Mission statement
- General statement of duties
- Education/Experience
- Working conditions
- Physical demands
- Requirements (certifications, licenses, clearances, etc.)
- Knowledge and performance requirements
- Essential functions (responsibilities as defined by CLIA and position)
- Disclaimer regarding changes
- Signatures (employee, lab director, HR, others?)



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Mission Statement

- Why are we here?
- Of the company and/or lab specific
- Example:

To be the laboratory of choice to deliver exceptional, cost effective, physician-directed healthcare with a special emphasis on patient satisfaction and preservation of community-based care.



General Statement of Duties

Example of MLS/MLT:

To be part of a high-performing physician office lab to ensure quality patient care. Perform administrative and clinical duties under the direction of the Lab Director and Technical Consultant. Duties such as phlebotomy, laboratory testing, instrument maintenance and troubleshooting. This position will be guided by the principles of trust, teamwork, responsibility, communication and mutual respect.



Job Descriptions: What to include

Education/Experience/Requirements

- Minimum educational requirements for testing performed (waived, moderate, high), Moderate complexity, minimum is high school diploma plus job-specific training
- Specialist: Chemistry, Hematology, Blood Bank
- Certification: ASCP, AMT, Quality Auditor, Quality Manager Diplomate in Lab. Management (DLM)
- As required by CLIA OR STATE or ACCREDITATION: Licensure, clearances (child abuse, FBI, I-9), CPR certification, others?



Job Descriptions: What to include

Working Conditions

- POL, Reference Lab, Urgent Care, Hospital
- Example:

Works in a fast-paced, well-lit, comfort-controlled physician office lab. High traffic area. Work may be stressful. Interaction with others may be constant and interruptive. Frequent exposure to communicable disease, toxic substances, medical preparations, and other conditions common to a clinic and laboratory environment.



Job Descriptions: What to include

Physical Demands

Example:

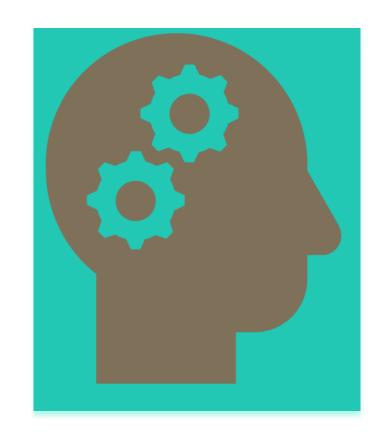
Possess the ability to lift 40 lbs. Occasional stress in working with tense patients. Involves substantial standing and walking, stooping, and bending. Requires ability to see test readings and good eye/hand coordination.

Cannot be colorblind for manual read tests.

http://www.toledo-bend.com/colorblind/ishihara.asp



Behavioral Interviewing



What is it and why use it?

Questions are based on the premise that past behavior is the best predictor of future behavior.

Used to evaluate teamwork, leadership, problem solving, handling of conflict, work ethic etc.

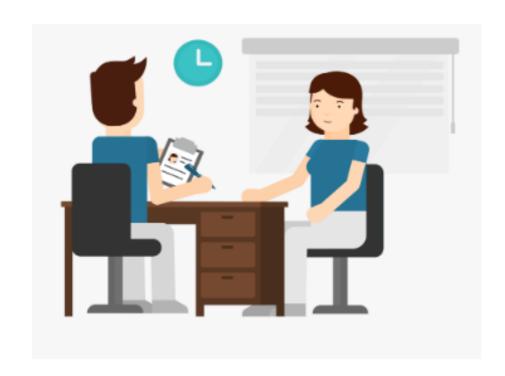


► Open-ended questions that measure desired attributes such as integrity, compassion, quality, responsiveness, respect, trust, innovation, etc.

Integrity Examples:

- Describe a situation where you acted with integrity. What did you do?
- Tell me about a time when you made a mistake and how you handled it.





- Tell me about a time when you had strict deadlines, and the priorities/details kept changing. (Stress management)
- How do you determine if the work you do is a quality job?
 What are some of the ways you have improved the quality of your own work? (Quality)



- Tell me about a time when you had to go above and beyond the call of duty in order to get a job done. (Service)
- Give me an example of when you showed initiative and took the lead.
 (Initiative/leadership)





- After asking the predetermined questions for each position, dig deeper, to get more specific information related to the competency. Ask "How," "What," "Tell me more."
- Interrupt the candidate to stay on track in the interview. "I'd like to hear more about 'x' (the original topic)."



Questions NOT to ask (Personal)

- Age, birthplace, height, marital status, religion, military discharge
- Childcare arrangements
- Health or medical conditions Do not directly or indirectly ask questions related to disabilities
- Make sure you give equal consideration to all applicants for employment regardless of race, color, age, disability, creed, religion, national origin, sex, pregnancy, marital status, sexual orientation or any legally protected status
- Check with your HR dept for more guidelines on this
 - Salary rules—no longer appropriate to ask for salary history in some states (gender gap)



Harvard Business Review Resources

Harvard Business Essentials
 Manager's Toolkit-The 13 skills
 Managers Need to Succeed 2004

Harvard ManageMentor — HIRING TOOLS							
Interview Preparation Form							
Name:		1	Date	ate/Time of Interview:			
Job Title: Lab Supervisor	/Test	ing Employee					
Key Responsibilities and Tasks 1. Oversee daily activities in the lab (operations)			Associated Training and/or Experience 1. Bachelor of Science MT				
Perform laboratory testing with accuracy/precision in a timely manner			2. ASCP certified preferred				
 Instructions/communications to/with patients/coworkers (mentoring, leadership, training/education) Maintain equipment, safe work area 			 Lab Experience: chemistry, hematology, immunoassay, urinalysis, microbiology, phlebotomy etc Supervisor Experience, minimum 3-5 yrs 				
	Stro	ng Customer Service Skills Ability to respond approp	riate	ly to instructio	Ability to work independently and in a ns, Flexibility, Adaptability, Tenacity,		
Key Areas to Explore		Questions to	o As	k	Notes		
Education/Initiative/Integrity	1. 2. 3.	Tell me about the laboratory work you have done before that prepares you for this position? knowledge of lab testing/CLIA regs/Management Give me an example of an important goal which you had set and how you reached the goal.		or this g/CLIA tant goal reached the			
Previous Experience	1.	with an ethical or integrity issue		nents and lave			
		Tell me about a time when you identified a problem with a lab test. What was the problem and what was the outcome?		as the me?			
	3.	Tell me about a time when you went out of your way to give great service to a customer.					
Job Accomplishments		What did you like best abou current job? And dislike?	ıt you	r last or			
		Share with me an example coach or mentor someone. improvements did you see i knowledge or skills?	Wha	ıt			
		If I were to ask your former colleagues/supervisor to de	scrib	e your work			



Recommendations for Recruitment & Retention

- Competitive salary
- Sign on bonuses
- Bonuses for referrals
- Tuition reimbursement
- Conference reimbursement (share info w/staff)
- Regular pay increases
- Flexibility in schedule (as much as possible)
- Implement tier levels for different types of lab roles (career ladder i.e. MLS I, MLS 2, MLS 3)
- Pair staff with mentor to build skills (leadership, department specific knowledge etc.)
- Examine on the job training and "train up"



Photo by Clem Onojeghuo on Unsplash



On Boarding

- Mentor assigned
- HR policies
- HIPAA
- Compliance
- Safety/Infection Control
- Job-specific training (each instrument, test system etc.)
- Evaluations (30, 60, 90-day evals./annually)





Effective Training

- Checklists
- Proper person(s) doing the training
- Positive and encouraging culture (not critical, not wanting to show how – power play)
- Pick someone who likes to teach
- All should teach to learn





What to Include on Training Checklists

- √ Who performed training
- ✓ Date(s)/time of training
- √ Skills needed to perform task(s)

(Tip: if using IQCP, each area of risk in testing should be addressed in training.)

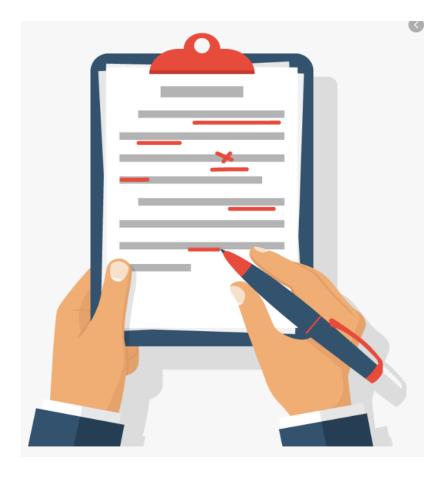
✓ Acknowledgement signature

Example: I have read the procedure manuals, instrument manuals and test kit package inserts. I feel I have been provided adequate training necessary to perform my job. I further understand the obligations of my responsibility to perform phlebotomy and testing according to procedure.



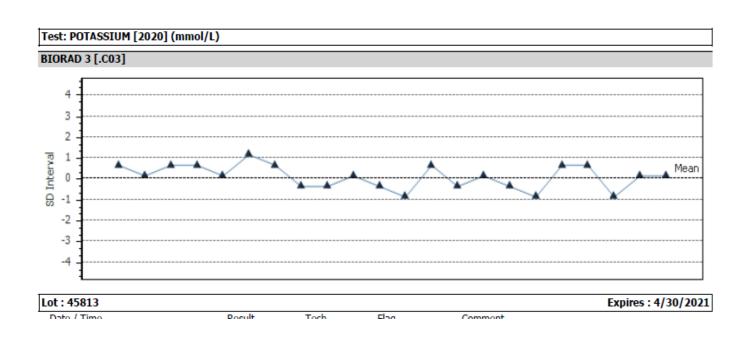
Correct performance and documentation of:

- Use of controls
- Instrument maintenance
- Instrument startup/shut down procedures
- Calibration and function checks
- Patient testing
- Interpretation and reporting of results





- Matching of test requisition and specimen
- How to enter or "pull electronic" test order in LIS
- Understands when/how to run controls
- Knows laboratory procedure for out of range of quality control
- Recognizes shifts and trends in controls
- Document remedial actions





- Knows procedure for documentation of complaints.
- Aware of/understands FDA reporting policy.
- Knows laboratory procedure for reagent management.
- Knows laboratory procedure regarding environmental monitoring and corrective action.





- Understands that participation in proficiency testing is required by CLIA for all testing personnel.
 Aware of lab policies and procedures regarding PT.
- Knows who to contact about questions or concerns in the laboratory (LD, TC, Supervisor).





Competency Assessment

Required by CLIA:

- Prior to reporting patient results
- Semi-annually for new operators
- Annually thereafter

Must be done by:

- LD/TC for moderate complexity
- LD/TS for high or if delegated to GS
- Must be documented and retained for minimum 2 years





Competency

 The ability of personnel to apply their skill, knowledge, and experience to perform their laboratory duties correctly.

 Competency assessment is used to ensure that the laboratory personnel are fulfilling their duties as required by federal regulations.

Required Elements Competency Assessment

- 1. Direct observation of routine patient test performance
- 2. Monitoring the recording and reporting of test results
- 3. Review of intermediate test results or worksheets
- 4. Direct observation of instrument maintenance
- 5. Blind sample testing (PT)
- 6. Assessment of problem-solving skills

"What do I Need to Do to Assess Personnel Competency?" Recommend reading! https://www.cms.gov/medicare/quality/clinical-laboratory-improvement-amendments/brochures



Competency Assessment Documentation

- ✓ Instrument printouts
- ✓ Proficiency Testing results
- √ Worksheets
- ✓ QA documentation (problem log, corrective action)

- ✓ Quiz/Problem solving questions
- ✓ Competency Evaluation: satisfactory? Or need additional training/reeducation/reevaluation?
- ✓ Save for a minimum of 2 years
- √ Required Signatures



The Grass is Greener Where you Water it



Photo by: lili-popper-29472-unsplash



Team Building

- To Build a strong team, you need to learn how to build confidence, trust and friendships!
- Takes Time. Not one & done! Constant action over time!
- Process that requires Skills
- Clarity, Expectations, Communication, Accountability



Photo by <u>Lukas Blazek</u> on <u>Unsplash</u>



Team Building

- Empathy-invested in them as "people" not just as "employees"
- Active listening and caring for others
- Collaboration
- Communication
- Confidence Building (trust/can rely on)
- Patience (tolerance/understanding)





Team Building

- Problem solving (deal w/conflicts effectively)
- Supportive (keeps a team together)
- Positive attitude
- Honesty
- Relationship building





Team Building

WHY ARE WE HERE? MISSION & VISION

- Need regular reinforcement of common goal of accurate tests & good patient outcomes.
- Would you want your parent, spouse, daughter or son to have their test performed here?



Photo by Randy Fath on Unsplash



Team Building

Genuine connections you get deeper discussions and builds skills among employees:

- Improved Communication
- Planning/Collaboration/Fostering of innovation & creativity
- Problem-solving
- Conflict resolution
- Accountability—let the staff be involved in decision making



Conflict Resolution

Using the "Interest-Based Relational" Approach (Mindtools.com)

- Treat the other person with respect.
 - Be courteous. (Professionalism)
- Separate people from problems.
- Listen carefully to different interests.
 - Try to understand their point of view



Photo by jean wimmerlin on Unsplash



Conflict Resolution

Using the "Interest-Based Relational" Approach (Mindtools.com)

- Listen FIRST, talk second. Seek clarification--- "if I understand what you are saying....".
- Set out the "facts" Underlying needs, interests & goals.
- Explore options together, seek a win/win resolution, may be something not previously done.



Culture

Build a Culture of Continuous Improvement

Build others up (<u>No negativity/gossip</u>).



https://www.vecteezy.com/free-vector/people-gossiping

- NO ONE IS PERFECT; don't point fingers—instead, get to the root cause of the problem.
- Learn from mistakes, put a process in place to avoid the same error from occurring.
- Learn from each other network and share knowledge.



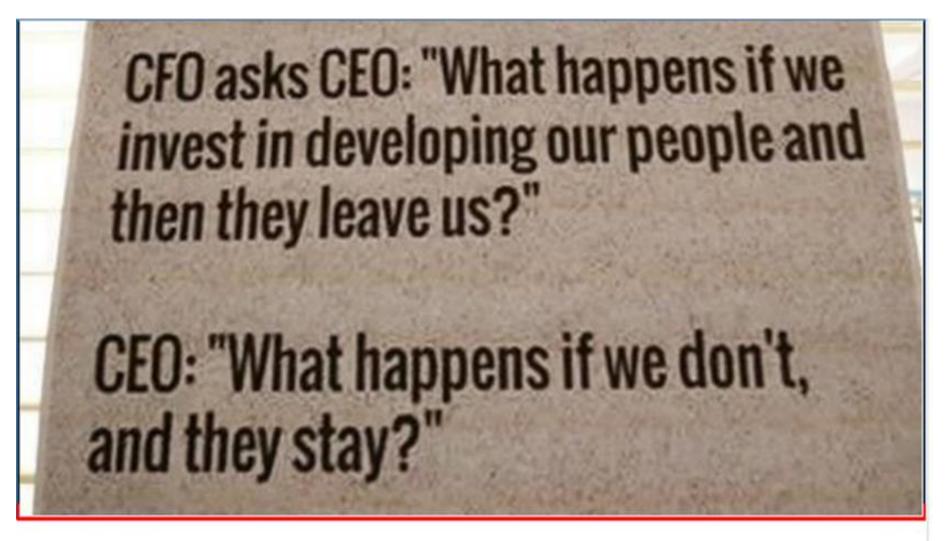
Culture

Build a Culture of Continuous Improvement

- Continuing education –webinars/meetings
- Continuing education-conferences/symposiums:
 - COLA Enrichment Forum, ASCP, ACHCU LabUniversity, ADLM (previously AACC), KEYPOCC, ASCLS, AMT
- Opportunities for Networking
- Take time off (to stay sane and come back refreshed)



Culture



Train people well enough so they can leave. Treat them well enough so they don't want to. -Richard Branson



Culture **CHANGE & ADAPT**

"You have to let go of what was to be able to embrace what can be"

By; David Dexter, President/CEO Sonora Quest Laboratories/Laboratory Sciences of Arizona



Photo by krakenimages on Unsplash



Culture CHANGE & ADAPT

"Blessed are the flexible, for they shall not be bent out of shape" - Michael McGriff

"The one constant is change" - Heraclitus of Ephesus (Greek philosopher)





Recognition

- Pay attention to staff work and let them know when you think they've done a good job.
- A little recognition and appreciation go a long way.
- Provide opportunities for career progression w/increased compensation and elevated job titles.



Photo by Samantha Hentosh on Unsplash



Communication

Staff Meetings—departments, full lab

"Daily Drumbeat"

"Weekly Wrap-up"

"Monthly Meeting"

• Ask what is going on—what are the most problematic current issues? What resources do they need to do their job more effectively?



Photo by LinkedIn Sales Solutions on Unsplash



Communication

- Via Newsletters/Emails/Postings on Bulletin Boards
- One on one (annual and/or semi-annual reviews)
- Put in writing mutually agreed upon list of measurable goals. Check progress periodically.
 Productivity will take care of itself.
- Repetition



Photo by Frank Leuderalbert on Unsplash



Communication

How do you deal with current staff (inherited) that have low morale/are low performers?

SUPPORT THEM!

- Meet with them one on one to find out what is going on
- Is it work-related or personal issues at home?
- Find ways to support them—assign mentor at work? refer to behavior health support? etc.



Communication

Admit when you make a mistake!

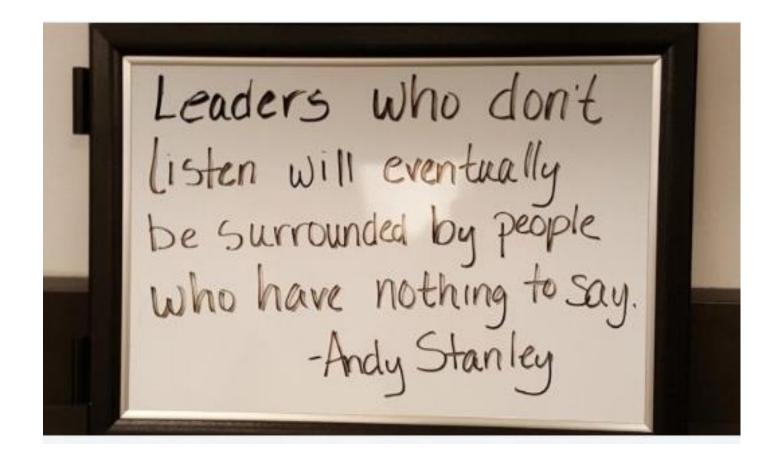
Bosses/Managers are human too!

Forgive/move on!





Communication





Culture-Supportive



Build a Culture of JOY! Make work an enjoyable place to be

- Support and encourage each other daily (Kindness/Respect).
- Laugh—humor is great for stress relief.
- Celebrate accomplishments
 - Doing well on inspection, new instrument/test system installation, professional accomplishments (articles written, research, degrees).



Team Building Exercises



Photo by LinkedIn Sales Solutions on Unsplash

MAKE TIME to Interact as a TEAM!

- Lab Week is a great opportunity
- Celebrate holidays as a team
- Monthly "birthday lunch carry in"
- Annual Picnic
- Specific Exercises to build familiarity between colleagues: Play games & do ice breakers!
 - i.e. "Two Truths and a Lie"



- Seek out and hire employees who are full of integrity, optimism, generosity, energy and the desire for continuous self improvement!
- Hire for character. Train skills as needed.



Photo by Dreamstime/Rawpixelimages



Engage your staff! Do they realize that what they do is <u>IMPORTANT</u> and makes a difference?

"The purpose of life is life of purpose."

—Robert Byrne



Photo by Melinda Gimpel on Unsplash



- Make sure you have well written job descriptions to <u>clearly define</u> responsibilities and expectations.
- Support the hires with good onboarding, training, and meaningful competency assessment. Consider assigning a mentor(s) to new and current employees.





Quotes:

"No one is as smart as all of us, and people have a right to be involved in the decisions that affect them."

-Kenneth Blanchard/Leading at a Higher Level

"We must become the change we wish to see in the world.

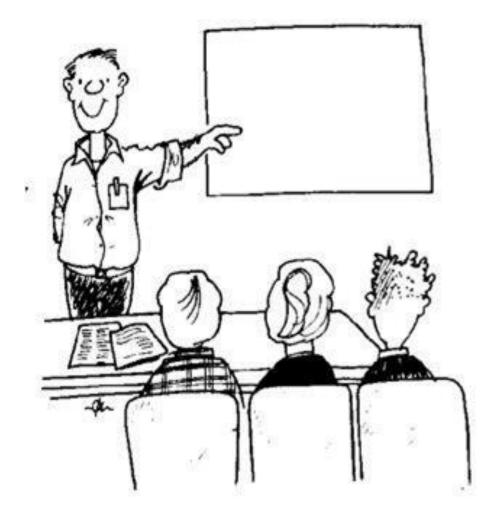
-Mahatma Gandhi



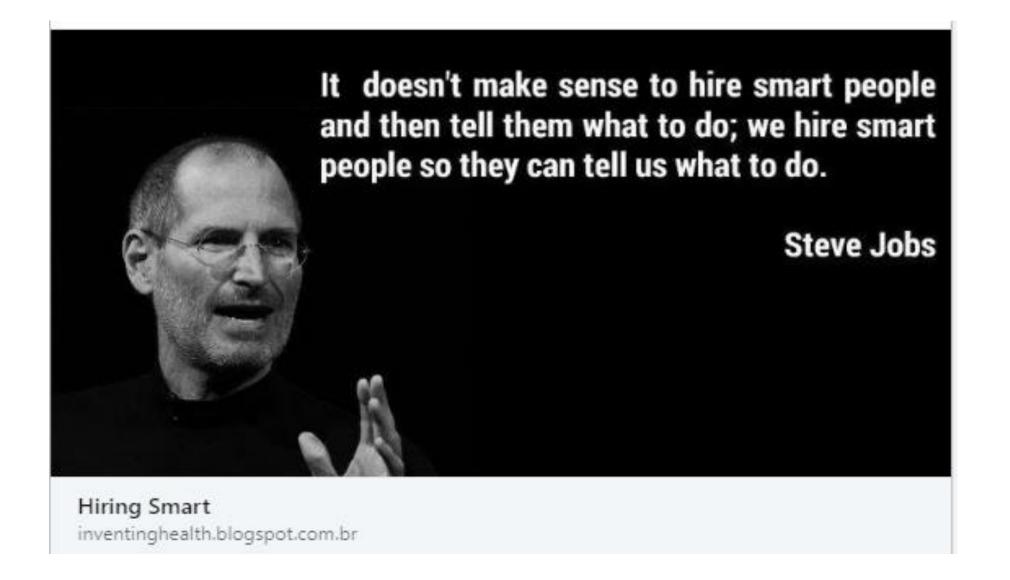
Photo by Edward Howell on Unsplash



- Ensure training and continued education*,
 professional development opportunities to
 continue to learn and bring new knowledge &
 skills to your lab.
 - *Also required by CLIA







"To-Do-Checklist"

- 1. Job Descriptions
- 2. Interview Prep Questions
- 3. Training Checklist
- 4. Competency Assessment
- 5. <u>Schedule Ongoing Support:</u> Communications, Evaluations, Mentoring, Professional Development





Resources

- https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CFR-2021-title42-vol5/xml/CFR-2021-title42-vol5-part493subpartM.xml
- CLIA Brochures
- https://www.cms.gov/Regulations-and-Guidance/Legislation/CLIA Brochures.htmlttps:///index.doi.org/10.1006/journal.com/linear/pii/station/clips.doi.org/10.1006/journal.com/linear/
- https://www.cms.gov/Regulations-and-Guidance/Legislation/CLIA/CME Courses for Laboratory Directors of Moderate Complexity Laborat ories



Resources

- https://www.teambonding.com/reasons-for-team-building/ Samantha McDuffee
- Conflict Resolution Using the "Interest-Based Relational" approach
- Mind Tools.com
- ASCP_UW_Clinical+Laboratory+Workforce_Report_2021.pdf
- https://ascpcdn.s3.amazonaws.com/static/ISTP/ASCP_UW_Clinical+Laboratory+Workforce_Report_202_
 1.pdf
- ASCP/Siemens Clinical Laboratory Workforce Blueprint <u>https://ascpcdn.s3.amazonaws.com/static/ISTP/Siemens Clinical+Laboratory+Workforce Brochure 042</u> <u>721.pdf</u>
- The 17 Essential Qualities of a Team Player by John C. Maxwell



Questions/Comments?

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Thank you for attending!

